



Natural Heritage &  
Endangered Species  
Program

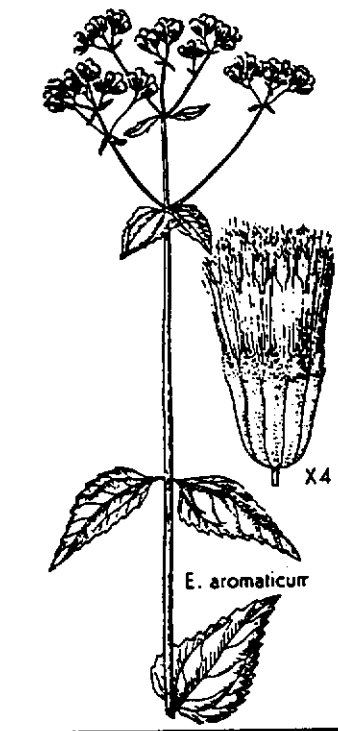
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife  
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MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

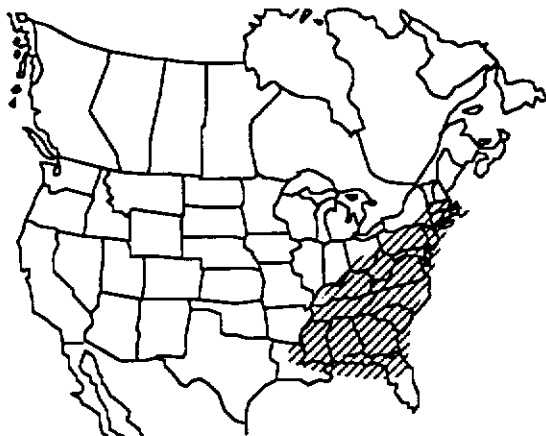
LESSER SNAKEROOT  
(*Eupatorium aromaticum* L.)

Description

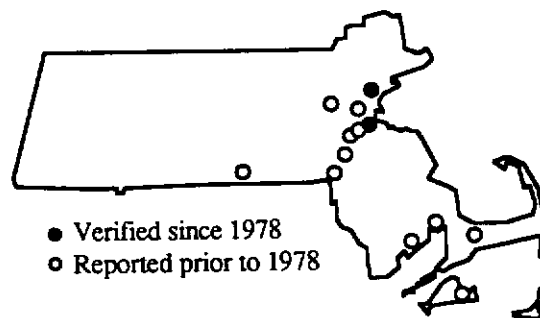
Lesser Snakeroot, a member of the Composite family (Compositae or Asteraceae), is an erect, herbaceous perennial with a corymb (flat-topped or convex, open flower-cluster) of bright white flowers. The plant is rarely greater than 8 dm (2 and 3/4 ft.) in height, and, in Massachusetts, it is always less than 2 ft. tall. Its slender stem is hairless--or nearly hairless--and may be either simple or with a few branches in the upper portion. Lesser Snakeroot's thickish, opposite leaves are 3-10 cm (1-5 in.) long by 2-5.5 cm (3/4-2 in.) broad and are on short (less than 1/2 in.) but distinct stalks. The leaf margins are toothed, with the teeth rounded to acute at the apex. The small, 4-6 mm (1/6-1/4 in.) long flowers are clustered into discoid heads (inflorescences without the flat rays of sunflowers, daisies, etc.). These heads, in turn,



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden, 1952.



Documented Range of Lesser  
Snakeroot



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

make up the corymb. Lesser Snakeroot flowers from August to mid-September.

#### Range

The documented range of *E. aromaticum* extends from Massachusetts to southern Ohio, south to Florida and Louisiana.

#### Similar Species

Lesser Snakeroot resembles White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*), but has a shorter, firmer pubescence (surface growth of short, soft hairs), much shorter leaf stalks and shorter leaf tips. Other similar plants called bonesets or thoroughworts have stalkless leaves and heads that are dull white due to dense bristles concealing each floret.

#### Habitat in Massachusetts

Habitats in Massachusetts include an open, dry oak-hickory-white pine-red maple woods on a rocky slope; an open oak-hickory forest on a rocky hill; and a mown field in what was formerly a scrub oak barren. Associated species include Little Bluestem Grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and numerous asters and goldenrods, including Wavy-leaved Aster (*Aster undulatus*), White Wood Aster (*A. divaricatus*), and Blue-stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*). All places where this species grows have been subject to recent burns, and it is believed that fire plays an important role in seed germination and the establishment of colonies.

#### Population Status

*E. aromaticum* is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts. There are 18 historical stations (unverified since 1978) in 13 towns and three current stations (discovered or relocated since 1978) in the Commonwealth. (Two towns contain both historical and current stations and are represented by a single black dot each on the town distribution map.) Reasons for the plant's rarity include fire suppression and lack of other disturbances within its habitat, leading to forest succession and canopy closure. Lesser Snakeroot is also considered rare in Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio, and West Virginia. The species was present historically in Rhode Island.